

1 – Awakening

The weak glow of the fluorescent lights flickered intermittently, casting wavering shadows across the white hospital walls. There was an almost absolute silence, broken only by the sound of heart monitors marking the rhythm of life for those standing at the edge of the unknown. Outside, night was falling without a hurry, but inside that room, time seemed frozen.

Gabriel's awakening was slow, as though he were emerging from deep waters in a diving suit. Each blink was a struggle, as if his eyes had forgotten how to open. The world around him seemed shrouded in a thick, confusing fog, punctuated by fragmented memories of a day he could not fully remember.

He moved for the first time in twelve days, just enough to catch the attention of a nurse who, until then, had been distracted on the other side of the room, flipping through a richly illustrated hardcover physiology textbook.

Gabriel heard her firm, hurried footsteps approaching in rubber-soled shoes. Soon, he felt the gentle, reassuring touch of her hand on his arm, and reality finally began to take shape.

"Gabriel? Can you hear me?" she asked, her voice soft but filled with anxiety.

He blinked, trying to understand where he was—or

whether he was simply dreaming. Intravenous tubes were attached to his arms, and the unmistakable smell of antiseptic filled his nostrils. His dry lips moved, but no words came out. It was as though his lips had been hermetically sealed by some invisible force.

“I’ll get the doctor!” the nurse said, hurrying out of the room.

During the minutes of solitude that followed, Gabriel struggled to remember. Something was wrong. Terribly wrong.

Why was he there? What had happened?

Fragments of memory began to return.

He was in a car... Yes, driving. He wasn’t alone.

Clara. His wife.

Clara was with him.

Were they arguing?

No...

They were laughing.

A violent impact. The sound of twisting metal invaded his mind, followed by a deafening silence.

Everything went dark after that.

“Clara...?” he whispered.

His own voice sounded hoarse and fragile, almost unrecognizable.

His gaze wandered across the room until it settled on the nurse.

"My phone... Nurse, could you get it for me?"

"Of course, sir. Just a moment. Here you go."

She placed the phone in his hands, helping him hold it. Gabriel still had difficulty moving his arms, and even the simplest gestures required effort. His belongings were carefully arranged on the bedside table.

With his heart racing, he turned on the phone and immediately opened the call log. His fingers trembled as he scrolled through the list. There were only calls from two or three weeks earlier: some from the administration at the school where he worked, and others from his friend Helena.

He checked again, more slowly, as though afraid he might have missed something.

Nothing.

Clara's name was nowhere to be found.

When the doctor entered, accompanied by the nurse, Gabriel's eyes met his with urgency.

"Clara!" he repeated, this time louder, more desperate.

The doctor, a gray-haired man with a restrained expression, glanced at the nurse before approaching the bed. There was something in his eyes that made the air in the room feel even heavier.

"Gabriel, you were in a car accident," he began, with forced calm. "You were in a coma for almost twelve days."

Gabriel's mind was still struggling to escape the fog

of the coma, but he heard the word he feared most:

Accident.

A tightness in his chest rose into his throat, making it almost impossible to speak.

“And Clara? Where is she?” he asked, his voice trembling.

The doctor sighed, lowering his head for a moment before continuing.

“Gabriel, your wife, Clara, did not survive the accident.”

The words cut through the air and lodged themselves inside him, echoing through his mind and ricocheting in every direction. It felt as though the universe had shattered before his eyes.

He tried to say something, but he couldn't.

It was as if all the energy in his body had been drained in a single instant.

Silence took over everything.

No tears fell. No scream shattered the room. There was only a deep, crushing emptiness—an abyss opening inside him that seemed to have no bottom.

The hospital, which had once been a place of passage and hope, had become a prison of meaningless sounds and images.

Gabriel remained silent. His eyes, once full of life, now carried a disturbing emptiness. There was no visible

pain, no outward despair, but something even more unsettling: the complete suspension of feeling, as though a part of him had died along with Clara.

The only person who insisted on visiting him was Helena, a fellow teacher at the school where he taught. With her attentive gaze and calm voice, she tried everything she could to comfort him.

“Gabriel...” she whispered once during a visit, holding his cold, motionless hand. “I know you’re suffering, but I’m here. I’m not going to give up on you.”

But it seemed he couldn’t hear her.

His world was buried beneath a fog of pain.

Clara’s death had taken something from him beyond her life itself. It had taken away his future, his sense of purpose. Silence had become a form of protest, a form of mourning.

She visited him constantly, trying to get a reaction out of him, trying to convince him to talk, to open up, but he remained silent.

Until one day, while they were talking—or rather, while Helena was telling him about some of her adventures as a teenager, her first jobs, and eventually her college years—she remembered that a boyfriend had once taken her to participate in an experience, or rather, a treatment he had been trying.

That was when she remembered it and decided to

suggest the same experience to her friend—something that, by then, had become more modern, more thoroughly studied, and better documented:

Past-Life Therapy.

“I know it sounds strange, Gabriel. But who knows? Maybe it could help somehow,” she said, with a hopeful look in her eyes. “Even if you don’t believe in any of this, at least it could give you a way to talk about what you’re feeling.”

Gabriel listened but did not respond.

He didn’t believe in such things, and the idea of hypnosis or any kind of “alternative therapy” seemed absurd.

But there was something in Helena’s eyes—a gentle persistence he could no longer ignore. She wanted to help him, and he was already growing tired of the emptiness his life had become.

A few days later—and only after yet another dose of persistence—he agreed.

Little did Gabriel know that this seemingly harmless step would be only the prologue to a journey that would dismantle everything he thought he knew about himself, about time... and even about the fragile boundary between life and death.

The true awakening—the kind capable of shaking his soul to its very core—was still to come.